ARNOVA

Presents the

2023 Gabriel G. Rudney Memorial Award for an Outstanding Dissertation in Nonprofit & Voluntary Action

to

Dr. Samantha Zuhlke

for

A Political Theory of Nonprofits: Partisanship, Policy, and the Rise of the Nonprofit Sector

The Committee unanimously agreed that Dr. Zuhlke's dissertation demonstrates impressive breadth and depth of research and made significant and original contributions to the field of nonprofit studies by expanding and enriching our understanding of nonprofit organizations as overlooked political institutions that represent the private pursuit of public authority.

The dissertation's major contribution is proposing a new political theory for nonprofits by theorizing the role of partisan politics within the nonprofit sector. Dr. Zuhlke's theory suggests that the emergence and growth of, and philanthropic giving to, nonprofit organizations, including 501c3 public charities—traditionally theorized as apolitical—are deeply embedded in politics. She used a creative and multi-faceted methodological approach, combining and analyzing data from multiple sources, including the National Council of Charitable Statistics and American National Election Survey, to empirically test her theoretical argument, including testing the effects of electoral outcomes on nonprofit donations. Her findings demonstrate that not only are nonprofits political actors, but may even emerge as a means of "private political exit within the public sphere."

The selection committee consisted of Dr. Tamaki Onishi (Chair, University of North Carolina at Greensboro), Dr. Angela Eikenberry (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Dr. Elizabeth Dale (Seattle University), Dr. Jiwon Suh (University of Texas at Arlington), and Dr. Qun Wang (University of Toledo).

The committee and the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action take great pleasure in awarding this year's prize to Dr. Samantha Zuhlke.